BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

The Economy

- **The number of British Columbians receiving regular employment insurance (EI) benefits declined 4.6%, to 64,770 (seasonally adjusted) between December and January.** The decrease in EI recipients was the fifth during the last half-year. Nationally, the number fell 3.0% (to 519,980), with fewer recipients in 10 of the 12 regions. The steady downward trend in the number of EI recipients at both the national and provincial levels is largely due to changes to the EI program. More stringent eligibility requirements have made it harder for some workers, such as those employed in seasonal and part-time jobs, to obtain EI benefits. Less than half of the people who were unemployed last year received EI. This compares to about 90% of unemployed workers at the beginning of the decade. *Source: Statistics Canada & BC STATS*

- **Average weekly earnings in British Columbia decreased marginally (-0.1%, seasonally adjusted) between December and January, falling to $621.** Weekly earnings were down in every region except Saskatchewan (+0.5%, to $550). The Canadian average was $605, or 0.6% less than in December. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Retail sales in British Columbia rose 0.7% (seasonally adjusted) between December and January.** This marked the third straight month in which sales by retailers have improved. Canadian sales were up 1.7%, as all regions except Yukon (-0.7%) posted increases. The four Atlantic provinces recorded the strongest growth, ranging from +3.3% in Nova Scotia to +4.3% in Prince Edward Island. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Health

- **Private and public sector health care expenditures in BC reached an estimated $2,817 per capita in 1998, 1.4% more than in the previous year.** Health care spending in BC was higher than in any other province, and well above the national average ($2,613). Per capita expenditures in other provinces ranged from $2,370 in New Brunswick to $2,760 in Manitoba.

  Twenty-seven percent ($761 per capita) of health care spending in BC is funded by the private sector, with the remaining 73% ($2,056) coming from the public purse. About half of private sector costs are out-of-pocket expenses. The largest private sector expenditures are for the services of dentists, optometrists, and other health care professionals ($337), prescription and non-prescription drugs ($194), and hospital charges ($98). The bulk of public sector spending goes to pay for hospital costs ($744), physicians ($464), services provided by other health care insitutions ($272) and drugs ($115). The remaining $461 funds other health care providers, capital services, public health, health research, and various other programs.

  Source: National Health Expenditure Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information

Crime

- **In 1997, there were 504,713 Criminal Code offences (excluding traffic offences) reported in the province, 6% less than in the previous year.** Another 104,625 drug crimes and offences under other statutes were reported, 6% more than in 1996.

  The province's crime rate dropped from 139 Criminal Code offences for every 1,000 people in 1996 to 128 in 1997. This was the largest annual decline in 20 years. The crime rate has been fal-

Report **Job prospects improve for BC youth**

Did you know...
BC farmers sold more than $25 million worth of field vegetables, tree fruits, berries and nuts at farm and roadside stands during 1997. More than a quarter (28%) of total vegetable sales were from a farm or roadside stand.

ling since 1991, when it peaked at 152. In 1997, it was the lowest it has been since 1985.

BC's property crime rate dropped from 87 to 78 between 1996 and 1997. The rate for other crimes, such as gambling, prostitution, or weapons offences, went from 37 to 36, while the violent crime rate was unchanged at 14. Over the longer term, the turnaround in crime rates since 1991 can be attributed to a significant drop in the incidence of both property crimes (with the rate decreasing 12 points) and other crimes (-12 points). The violent crime rate has remained fairly stable, varying between 14 and 15.

Source: Police & Crime Statistics, 1988-1997, Ministry of Attorney General

- **Municipal crime rates in 1997 ranged from a low of less than 50 offences per 1,000 residents in Coldstream (46), Spallumcheen (46) and North Saanich (47) to a high of 260 in Willams Lake.** Crime rates are calculated using the resident population of a community (which excludes commuters, students, tourists, and other visitors). Crimes committed by non-residents are attributed to the municipality in which they occur. This affects rates in core cities and tourist destinations such as Vancouver (175), Victoria (219), Williams Lake (260), Courtenay (210) and Whistler (224).

Source: Police & Crime Statistics, 1988-1997, Ministry of Attorney General

- **There were 114 homicides reported in BC during 1997 (11 less than in the previous year), giving the province a homicide rate of 2.9 per 100,000 population.** Police laid charges in 82 cases. The victims knew the person accused of killing them in 68 of these homicides. Fifteen victims–including seven children (under 12) and one youth (12-17) killed by a parent–died at the hands of a family member, and 13 were killed by a spouse or ex-spouse. Forty were killed by an acquaintance or friend, and 12 were murdered by a stranger. In two cases, the relationship between the victim and the accused was unknown. *Source: Police & Crime Statistics, 1988-1997, Ministry of Attorney General*

Youth Courts

- **13,059 cases (involving one or more charges) were processed in BC youth courts during 1997/98.** The youth case rate was 423 for every 10,000 young people (aged 12 to 17) living in the province. Nationwide, a total of 110,883 cases (453 per 10,000) were heard in 1997/98. Case rates were highest in the three Prairie provinces (942 in Saskatchewan, 792 in Manitoba, and 653 in Alberta). Ontario (493) was the only other province where the case rate was above the national average. Quebec (188) had the lowest case rate of any province. Policy initiatives such as pre-charge screening (which is mandatory in BC, Quebec and New Brunswick) and other programs are partly responsible for the wide range of case rates among the provinces, as they keep less serious cases out of youth courts in some provinces. *Source: SC, Catalogue 85-522-XPB*

Exposure to Low Income

- **One in five Canadians experienced low income at some point during the period from 1993 to 1996.** However, about half of the families who were exposed to low income in any given year were able to improve their situation within twelve months.

One in twenty (4.9%) Canadians aged 16 and over experienced low income in all four years. Those most at risk were immigrants who came to Canada after 1986 (21.1%), unattached individuals (18.7%), and lone parents (18.2%). Visible minorities (16.7%), individuals with a physical, mental, or health condition that limited their ability to work (16.7%) and immigrants who came to Canada between 1977 and 1986 (14.7%) were also at high risk of being trapped in a low income situation. Families where the main bread winner had a university degree were least likely to remain in a low income situation. Only 1.4% of individuals in this group experienced low income during all four years from 1993 to 1996.

Source: SC, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

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Infoline Report:

Youth in BC – Their job prospects are beginning to improve

Contact: Anne Kittredge / (250) 387-0374

Originally published in November 1998 issue, *Earnings & Employment Trends*. Annual subscription: $60 + GST

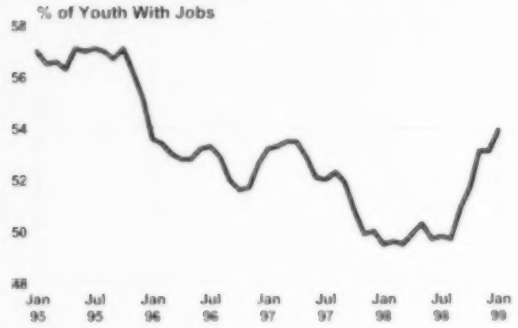
Over the last six months, BC has shown particularly strong job growth and fortunately the young have participated in this upswing. Their January 1999 unemployment rate, at 14.9 per cent, is almost 4 percentage points below the 18.7 per cent level recorded six months earlier.

During the last year and a half, BC youth (age 15-24) have experienced some of their most difficult times finding work in decades. In late 1997, their unemployment rates began to increase and remained in the 18 per cent range right through the summer months of 1998.

While their current unemployment rate remains above levels experienced at the turn of the decade (around 13 per cent), it is now more in line with the rates of the 93-95 period, a more normal period for youth.

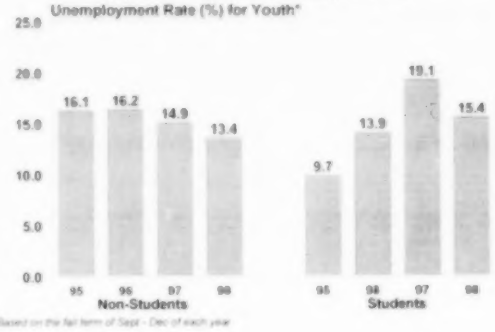
Job market participation among youth has also been climbing in recent months, alongside their falling unemployment rates. This translates into a rising proportion of youth with jobs.

The Proportion of Youth with Jobs Was Higher in January 99 than It Has been for 3 years.



There are two very distinct labour markets for youth, one being for students who seek part-time jobs, which helps them remain in school; and the other is for youth who are out of school, the majority of them requiring full-time work.

Students were the ones who really had a rough time in 1997, but fortunately, their unemployment rates appear to be on the way down.



*Based on the fall term of Sept - Dec of each year

For the 1997 period, when jobs were so hard to come by for youth, it was primarily the students who were struggling. Their unemployment rate reached 19.1 per cent in the autumn term (September to December), the highest it had ever been, at least since records were first kept (1976).

The non-student population have actually been in fairly good shape in recent years. Only the boom year of 1980 recorded an unemployment rate below the 13.4 per cent seen in the fall term of 1998.

In the past it was generally the non-student population (the lesser educated of the two groups) that had difficulty finding jobs. However, for two years now, it has been the students who have had the real problem finding work. The decrease in the unemployment rate for students from 19.1 to 15.4 per cent is an improvement, but there is still a long way to go to return to the

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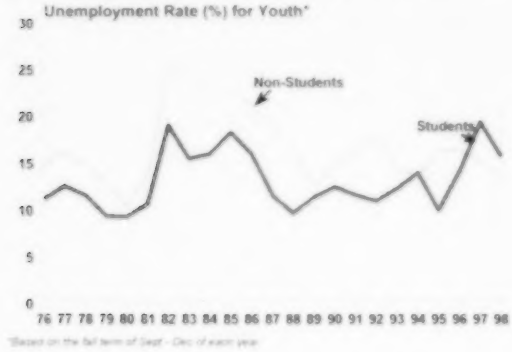
12 per cent levels experienced during the 1987 to 1996 period.

Except for the last two years, Non-Students usually have a higher unemployment rate than Students



*Based on the fall term of Sept - Dec of each year.

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	4,016.9	0.9
Canada	30,381.1	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	1997	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,775	0.1
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,340	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Jan	2,912	7.0
Merchandise Exports (raw) Jan	2,098	11.9
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Jan	2,773	-2.6
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		
(all items - 1992=100)	Feb '99	% change on one year ago
BC	110.1	0.5
Canada	109.1	0.7
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
(seasonally adjusted)	Feb '99	% change on one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,104	3.8
Employed - BC	1,934	5.7
Unemployed - BC	170	-14.2
		Feb '98
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.1	9.8
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.8	8.6
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Mar 24/99	Mar 25/98
Prime Business Rate	6.75	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.60	6.40
- 5 year	7.15	6.85
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Mar 24/99	Mar 25/98
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.5039	1.4100
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.6633	0.7093
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Jan '99	% change on one year ago
BC	615.81	1.0
Canada	604.55	-0.1

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm

Released this week by BC STATS

- Business Indicators, March 1999
- Current Statistics, March 1999
- Earnings & Employment Trends, December '99

Next week

- Tourism Room Revenue, December 1999
- Exports, January 1999

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